DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 449 492 CS 014 266

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TITLE An Investigation of Reading Comprehension at the Primary Level.
PUB DATE 2000-12-00
NOTE 60p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and SkyLight Professional Development.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Classroom Environment; Grade 2; *Instructional Effectiveness; Primary Education; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Difficulties; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; Reading Material Selection; Reading Motivation; Rural Education; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

This report describes a program that will improve reading comprehension. The targeted population consists of second grade students at a rural northwestern Illinois school. Evidence for the existence of reading problems included daily teacher observations, student reading surveys, and assessments that indicated the level of student reading comprehension. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that there is an absence of parental support, students have a negative attitude towards reading, and there is a lack of time for reading instruction. A review of professional literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three categories of interventions: writing to develop the reading process, increasing reading comprehension through whole group instruction, small group instruction, self selected reading motivational book talks, teacher read alouds; the QAR questioning technique; and gaining background knowledge from an environment that is print rich. In review of the post intervention data the researchers found that there had been an increase in reading comprehension of the targeted second grade classes. Students showed improvement in their ability to retell and answer implicit and explicit questions. This was a result from an increased emphasis on writing skills, reading strategies, and changes in the reading environment. Contains 25 references and 8 tables of data. Appendixes contain a reading conference record, a survey instrument, a writing rubric, a take home book list, a list of 30 teacher read-aloud books, and a 37-item list of student book picks. (Author/RS)

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ED 449 492

AN INVESTIGATION OF READING COMPREHENSION AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

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Gina Peterson
Lisa Spivey

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

December, 2000

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Abstract

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This report describes a program that will improve reading comprehension. The targeted population consists of second grade students at a rural northwestern Illinois school. Evidence for the existence of reading problems included daily teacher observations, student reading surveys, and assessments that indicated the level of student reading comprehension.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that there is an absence of parental support, students have a negative attitude towards reading, and there is a lack of time for reading instruction.

A review of professional literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three categories of interventions: writing to develop the reading process, increasing reading comprehension through whole group instruction, small group instruction, self selected reading, motivational book talks, teacher read alouds, and the QAR questioning technique, and gaining background knowledge from an environment that is print rich.

In review of the post intervention data the researchers found that there had been an increase in reading comprehension of the targeted second grade classes. Students showed improvement in their ability to retell and answer implicit and explicit questions. This was a result from an increased emphasis on writing skills, reading strategies, and changes in the reading environment.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted second grade classes exhibited a lack of reading comprehension that interfered with academic growth. Evidence for the existence of the problem included daily observations, student reading surveys, and assessments that indicated the level of student reading comprehension.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted elementary school was from a small unit district located in rural northwestern Illinois. Over 350 Caucasian students were enrolled kindergarten through eighth grade with no minorities. The average class size was 17 students. The school had a 96% attendance rate, a truancy rate of 0%, and a student mobility rate of 10%. Students from families who received public aid were identified as low-income students. Low-income families made up 12% of the student population.

The faculty at the targeted elementary school consisted of 31 certified staff members and an administrator. There were 18 classroom teachers, 2 special education resource teachers, a Title I reading teacher, a speech pathologist, a counselor, 2 physical education teachers, a music teacher, a band teacher, an art teacher, a librarian, a computer teacher, and a Spanish teacher. The

support staff included 4 full-time aides, a full-time tutor, and a school nurse. The average experience level of the staff was 14 years. Master's degrees were held by 24% of the staff.

On January 19, 1975 the targeted elementary school building was officially dedicated to the unit district. The school building was a necessity due to the outdated and deteriorating condition of two previous elementary schools. The building was built with an open classroom style to provide flexibility within the structure and easy teacher collaboration. A telephone communication system was installed to provide for strong parent-teacher communication. In the area of technology, the school had a computer lab with 22 computers and 5 mini-labs between classrooms. The staff was successful in incorporating technology into many curriculum areas. A technology teacher and individual classroom teachers worked together to instruct students on how to access the computer. Additional academic programs consisted of a Title I program, gifted program, Spanish program, and daily tutor. The students also benefited from having a full time school guidance counselor.

Non-academic programs included opportunities in the performing arts such as choir, band, and speech teams. An athletic program was available which included football, basketball, track, and cheerleading. Through combined efforts of the school and community additional programs were offered such as: Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE), Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H, soccer, baseball, and softball. Organizations such as Boosters, Kiwanis, and Women's Club gave generous donations of money and time to support the academic and athletic programs of the targeted school. The community implemented a support group for the targeted school. The loyal support from the community continued to be the backbone of the school's success.

The Surrounding Community

The village was located directly off Interstate 80 approximately 120 miles west of Chicago. The population was just over 800 with about 365 families. The community provided a local library, bank, grocery store, several restaurants, a doctor's office, a local dentist, three churches, and a recording studio, as well as other specialty shops. Being a rural community there were several agricultural related businesses. There was one full-time police officer and a volunteer fire department. The village was located within driving distance of four large metropolitan cities with a total population of more than 369,000. The major employers near the area included Deere and Company, Oscar Mayer, Alcoa, Rock Island Arsenal, and many other manufacturing industries.

National Context of the Problem

Spagnolo wrote, "Reading is at the heart of all learning. Students' success or failure in reading at the early grades resonates throughout the rest of their lives. A child's opportunity to succeed is dependent on the right to read" (Illinois State Board of Education, 1997, p.ii).

As a nation, the lack of reading comprehension has been a concern in the public school systems. Many elementary school students do not master reading skills that are expected of them on state assessments and observations made by teachers. The National Assessment of Education Process (NAEP) reported that less than half of 17-year-old students could locate, comprehend, summarize, and explain complex information in text. The NAEP revealed the majority of students are not developing intellectual capacities necessary for democratic citizenship, lifelong learning, and productive employment in the economic system (Patrick, 1993). A basic life skill for American children appears to be at risk. "Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child's success in school, and indeed throughout life. Without the ability to read well,

opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success inevitably will be lost" (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985, p.1).

Becoming a skilled reader is a long process that involves many steps. One of the key components to achieve strong reading skills involves practicing reading. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1992) reported that access to reading material in the home was significantly deficient both in families with the means to purchase materials and in those families who could only rely on public libraries. Many children in the past read in their free time more than children do today. There has been a 10% drop in reading materials such as magazines, newspapers, and books provided to children by their parents in the home in the last 30 years. Students who read a lot and find reading easy tend to be better readers and read more than those who do not (The Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1992).

"American public schools were once ranked with the world's best. No longer. We have lost our edge, and that poses dire consequences for our country's future" (Elam, 1993, p.55). Reading comprehension is a national concern among educators. Nine-year-olds today appear to be somewhat better in math and science than in the past, but only a little better in reading. Educators have observed that students with low reading comprehension skills perform below grade level in academic areas, display a lack of self-confidence, and limit themselves in future life experiences.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

PROBLEM EVIDENCE

The students of the targeted second grade class at the participating school exhibited a lack of reading comprehension, which interfered with their academic success. Researchers observed and recorded reading achievement while listening to students read in various settings. A student reading attitude survey was given to the targeted second graders to determine their motivation for reading. Various assessments were given to the targeted students as well as former second grade students at the targeted school, and these assessments were analyzed. The researchers' collection of data established that a lack of reading comprehension existed in the targeted school.

Classroom teachers observed and recorded that students in the targeted second grade class in January, 2000, were inconsistent in their abilities to comprehend materials they had read on their own or in group settings. The majority of the second grade students had difficulty retelling the central parts of a narrative, indicating that the students might not have understood story structure. The daily observations reflected students' lack of answering comprehension questions correctly. The questions assessed the students' ability to make inferences and whether the students remembered and understood the information stated directly by the author (Caldwell and Leslie, 1995). The daily oral reading conference records (appendix A) indicated the students'

degree of reading comprehension. Reading processes, of course, are not directly observable and must be inferred from samples of behaviors assumed to reflect "real reading" (Carey and Farr, 1986). Students' answers to questions provided one such sample, and since the 1930's, questions have remained the predominant tool for assessing reading comprehension (Durkin, 1978-1979). Students also displayed a lack of using appropriate reading strategies. The daily oral reading conference records showed the strategies and concepts that the students were using, and recorded the miscues under the appropriate column (Hill and Ruptic, 1994).

In January 2000, an informal student reading attitude survey (appendix B) was administered to the targeted second grade. The survey identified the existence of problems with reading motivation among the students. The second grade student surveys indicated a majority of the students were not motivated to read during free time. The survey also indicated that many of the students did not feel confident in reading aloud to peers, or answering questions about the materials they had read.

Table 1

Targeted School's Illinois Goal Assessment Program Reading Scores

Year	Grade 3	Grade 6
1992	282	294
1993	294	313
1994	290	321
1995	255	286
1996	274	311
1997	245	281
1998	253	285

Table 1 shows the I.G.A.P. reading scores indicate a problem with the students' reading ability at the targeted school. In the last few years there has been a decline in the average

I.G.A.P. reading scores from students at the third and sixth grade levels each year. In 1992 the third graders at the targeted elementary school scored 282, but by 1997 the score declined to 245. The sixth grade scored 311 in 1996 compared to 281 in 1997 and 285 in 1998. The overall decrease in the percentage of students meeting goals indicated that reading comprehension at both the third and sixth grade levels were declining.

Table 2

Scholastic Testing Services Reading Scores Expressed in Percentile

Year	Grade 3	Grade 6
1992	85	84
1993	84	87
1994	80	89
1995	65	70
1996	75	85
1997	56	74

Table 2 shows the third and sixth grade S.T.S. scores at the targeted elementary school also signified a reading problem with a decline in the past six years. In 1994 the third graders scored in the 80th percentile, which was the beginning of a steady decline. In 1997 the score took a major decline when the third graders scored in the 56th percentile mastery level. In 1992 the sixth graders scored in the 84th percentile, which was comparable to the 87th percentile in 1993 and the 89th percentile in 1994. A noticeable decrease in the test score resulted in the 70th percentile in 1995.

In February of 1999 the targeted second grade students were given the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test as first graders. This was a winter national scaled study used to measure reading achievement. The preliminary national percentile rank for the targeted class in word decoding was a score of 73 and the comprehension score was 63. The total overall percentile rank was 67, showing a need for improvement in the area of reading.

The two tables show concern for reading ability, indicating a steady decline in the reading assessment scores. Reading scores at the targeted school appear to decline with the exception of I.G.A.P. scores in 1993, 1994, and 1996 and reading scores in 1993. Table 2 showed that students who took the S.T.S. as third graders in the year of 1992, scored 15 percentage points lower on the S.T.S. as sixth graders in 1995. Students who took the S.T. S. as third graders in 1994 scored 16 percentage points lower on the S.T.S. as sixth graders in 1997. The tables along with the reading attitude survey and reading test suggest that some students do not comprehend reading material at grade level.

Probable Causes

There are several possible causes for poor reading comprehension exhibited by students, which interfered with academic success. The identified probable causes include the absence of parental support, students' negative attitudes toward reading, and the shortened time of uninterrupted reading instruction in a classroom. Families' busy schedules make it difficult to find time for literacy activities. Some children are not read to at home because education is not seen as a top priority. Often children do not see parents as role models for reading and writing. Many children do not see parents reading books, magazines, or newspapers (Office of

Educational Research and Improvement, 1992). In many homes, unstructured time is spent on passive activities like watching television or playing video games. In the classroom, the students are not provided with sufficient uninterrupted work time due to scheduling conflicts. Scheduling conflicts occurred because the elementary school, middle school, and high school shared the following teachers: physical education, art, music, and Spanish. Unfortunately, this was a result of a very segmented elementary schedule.

An examination of research literature revealed various probable causes relating to students' deficiency in reading comprehension. Anderson et al. (1985) wrote, "Reading begins in the home. To a greater or lesser degree, depending upon the home, children acquire knowledge before coming to school which lays the foundation for reading" (p. 21). Many students are coming to school without the basic reading foundation. Parents are not discussing and teaching their children about the world around them. Teachers have also observed the fact that parents are not providing educational support at home once their children are in school. Many students return to school daily with unfinished assignments, unread library books, and inadequate school supplies. With busy family schedules, many parents are not meeting students' educational needs away from school. Children are not getting to bed on time, are not eating well-rounded meals, and are spending one-third of their unstructured time watching television or playing video games, and only 1% or less of their free time reading (Fitzgibbons 1997). Education no longer seems valued as a top priority in many families.

Teachers have observed that some students displayed a negative attitude toward reading. Negative reading attitudes are another cause for a deficiency in reading comprehension. These attitudes come from students who struggle in reading and feel helplessness, and from the students who come from homes where education is not valued. Students who struggle with

reading have a negative attitude towards reading. Students who do not view themselves as proficient readers, give up on reading tasks easily. Therefore, they become passive and thoughtless and sometimes are disruptive (Anderson et al., 1985). Though motivation is essential in learning to read, the lack of motivation is not the only problem faced by readers.

To implement reading and writing instruction, teachers need to manage classroom time. Students need to work in an environment where they can focus and work without interruptions. "We live in a one-draft-only society, a land of instant diets, frozen waffles, and throw-away razors. Our society allows little time for sustained effort, for knowing what it is to do one's best and then make one's best better" (Calkins 1986, p. 23). Calkins also discussed how school days are broken up into limited amounts of time for each subject area, for copying from the board, for completing worksheets, or for brief classroom discussions. Then, students are in and out of the classroom for "specials" throughout the day such as in music, art, physical education, and Spanish. Calkins (1986) quotes Graves at describing this broken up day as the "cha-cha-cha curriculum." (p. 24)

> "Many researchers emphasize that because the school day is so segmented, teachers spend an average of 40 percent of their time on choreography. Interruptions shatter the school day, making absorption in a project almost impossible. Where in the helter-skelter pace to the school day, is there time for the probing, experimentation, dialogue, and reflection that contribute to genuine learning?" (as cited in Calkins, 1986 p. 24).

Students need long blocks of uninterrupted time so they can be engaged in learning and complete their assigned tasks.

Students demonstrated poor reading comprehension, which hindered academic success. The identified causes might be a lack of parental support, families' busy schedules, lack of good

role models, students' negative attitudes toward reading, and the shortened time of uninterrupted reading instruction in a classroom. Research indicates that these causes can be contributing factors in the success or failure of a child's reading ability.

CHAPTER 3

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

There is a common concern among educators, parents, and the general public about students' reading comprehension abilities. Anderson (1985) supported the idea that children's reading comprehension and thinking abilities are influenced at an early age by their home and family circumstances. Teachers are provided with ample sources to consult when deciding on how to implement reading into the classroom. Cunningham and Allington (1999) sympathized with the challenges that students place in their teacher's hands. However, they remind educators to accept students how they come to the classroom and teach to their professional abilities.

Calkins (1986) and Graves (1994) viewed writing as an essential part of learning to read. Calkins (1986) indicated that when students are writing they are making reading connections such as word patterns, letter-sound relationships, and meaning. Comprehension skills are developed through writing when students are sharing their written work. When students read and reread their own writings, they are focusing on communicating their ideas. Writing and reading strategies reinforce one another. In second grade, as writing becomes more complex, the students begin to mimic writing styles beyond patterned text. They become more aware of text structure, story elements, and word knowledge, and acknowledge that writing represents personal meaning. For students to have the opportunity to experience success in writing, they need to have

sufficient time to develop written work on a daily basis. Calkins (1986) and Graves (1994) agreed that students should be given 45 minutes to an hour a day of uninterrupted writing time. Researchers in literacy suggest that when students are learning to write they are learning about the reading process. Students learn to write best when they are given writing opportunities and time to practice. Writing practice allows students to make connections and see relationships between oral and written language (Karnowski, 1989).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) stated that whole group guided reading leads to the independent reading that builds the process and is the heart of a balanced-literacy program. Guided reading is an approach, which enables a teacher and a group of children to discuss, read, and think their way through a text, which makes an introduction to reading silently possible. Stimulating students' interest comes first, and the methods of guided reading enable the teacher, from the beginning, to identify with situations and characters in books, to involve students in predicting what will happen next, and to respond to ideas. By using this method, students come to know reading as a process of actively reconstructing meaning, and not as a recitation of words. It is a process of predicting one's way through print. Students focus on building meaning while using problem-solving strategies to figure out words that are unknown and to understand concepts they have not been confronted with in print. Students begin by reading texts with a minimum of support and continue by reading them over and over for independence and fluency. In whole-class guided reading all students read and discuss the same book at the same time. The students have a copy of the book, and the teacher guides the literature discussion. However, this whole-class reading may be varied. The teacher can read aloud while the students follow along visually in their own copies. During this time the teacher can "think aloud" and make thought processes and strategies apparent to students. Students may read pages silently for a specific

purpose. Part of a page can be read silently and part can be read as a shared reading. Also, students may read to note the author's purpose or to answer a specific question. When a stumbling block to comprehension occurs, the teacher can identify students' needs and can provide appropriate teaching during the guided reading lesson or in subsequent lessons. The ultimate goal is to assist children on how to use independent reading strategies successfully (Coder, Hill, Neff, Schilb, & Williams, 1999). "Whole-class reading is an excellent way to get to know the children, observe strategies and attitudes, and build a reading community" (Routman, 1991, p. 39).

Small group reading instruction is also an effective teaching strategy to improve reading skills as the need for skills arises. In small group instruction, students in the group are alike in their development of the reading process and are able to read text on similar levels. This type of grouping provides the teacher opportunities to support students' reading in ways that help to develop independent reading strategies. Students also develop independence and confidence in their reading abilities. Small groups provide students opportunities for peer interaction. Cazden and Richard-Amato (as cited in Klingner and Vaughn, 1999) agreed that peer interaction enables students to have meaningful conversation about content materials. Through peer interaction students are able to support each other's thoughts and ideas, which helps them to construct meaning from what they have read. Ongoing daily observations and assessments allow for the students to be grouped and regrouped according to their level of reading.

Fisher (1995) wrote that students need to be given time each day for self-selected reading to strengthen their existing reading strategies and to practice new strategies using a wide variety of genres. During this time students choose books or reading materials that are of interest to them. High interest reading materials that are available to students entice them to want to read.

Fisher also suggested that the amount of time students spend reading is evident in their ability to comprehend and use appropriate reading strategies. However, materials appropriate for the level of reading difficulty need to be selected by the classroom teacher. This should entail mini-lessons on how to choose books at individual reading levels. Self-selected reading lends itself to include other mini-lessons on building reading comprehension and decoding strategies, so students can progress toward becoming independent readers.

Sigmon (1999) supported the fact that independent reading practice provides opportunities for the reader to build fluency, work on reading strategies, enjoy self-selected reading materials, and boost self-confidence in personal reading abilities. During self-selected reading, the classroom teacher should use this time to conference and observe the readers one-on-one. Each day, a few students need to be given the time to share their reading material with the whole class or small groups. Sharing is another way to reinforce the perception that teachers value their hard work and validate the importance of reading to the students.

Motivational book talks encourage students to respond to what they have read. Students naturally want to share with their peers. Opportunities to share a book they have enjoyed can motivate students to read, and motivate the listeners to read as well. Student book talks may be done daily in small or large groups. Students look up to adults in their environment as role models, therefore, motivational book talks should also come from adults. Clearly, enthusiasm, insights, and high expectations can entice students to become more actively involved in literacy (Rosenblatt, as cited in Murphy, 1998). "Children read not because they are told—let alone, ordered—to read, but because they see adults around them reading, and using that reading productively for their own purposes" (Otto, 1992-1993 p. 319). Classrooms are places where both students and adults, for both personal and social reasons, pursue literate activities.

Teacher read-alouds are important to include into a daily routine. Fisher (1995) believed the extensive reading aloud that takes place in the classroom leads the students to develop a love of reading. The love of reading supports and encourages the love of writing. Both reading and writing are strengthened when students continue to be engaged in read alouds, not just in the early years, but throughout and beyond the elementary grades. Students' auditory comprehension is beyond their word recognition skills. Therefore, through listening, younger students can extract meaning and enjoy material that they are not yet able to read (Beck and McKeown, 1999). All students can analyze and compare stories which are read to them. Reading fluency can be modeled through the use of teacher read-alouds (Fountas and Pinnell, 1996). Through read-alouds students gain background knowledge, build sight word vocabulary, and understand how the fluency of text should sound. Reading authorities recommend that teachers read from a variety of sources such as informational materials, traditional favorites, poetry, and "easy books" (Cunningham and Allington, 1999). This also stimulates motivation for children to select a variety of reading materials and to read for pleasure. Researchers stress the importance discussion of literature throughout the reading of the text. When students are able to share, reflect, and discuss during the reading, they are building and supporting comprehension skills (Beck and McKeown, 1999).

Another instructional teaching strategy for improving reading comprehension is the use of Question-Answer Relationship (QAR). This strategy has been shown to increase students' comprehension of text more than some other questioning strategies. The goal of QAR is for the student to become more metacognitively aware by asking comprehension questions. In using this strategy, students are able to develop the four types of QAR's used in monitoring their own comprehension. The four types of questions include: Right There, Think and Search, Author and

You, and On My Own. The QAR procedure should progress from group to independent activities (Raphael, 1986). The students should become familiar enough with the ideas to use the procedure automatically. Students must be able to see the relationships between various questions and responses. These questions and responses will enable them to transfer meaning to understand the world around them (Ezell and Kohler, 1992).

Students gain background knowledge from an environment that is print rich. Beck and McKeown (1999) stated that the amount of background knowledge students have actually determines how well they process and store new information. In their study, they found that students with broad knowledge were able to comprehend and recall more important details from materials read, than those students who had limited background knowledge. Students can have vicarious experiences through reading. "Consequently, enriching students' knowledge is the key to enhancing their comprehension of text" (p.2). Students of all ages and levels of learning should be surrounded with print in classroom environment. The environment should contain a wide variety of reading and writing materials such as: posters, charts, magazines, newspapers, books of all genres, and other interactive reading and writing materials. This reading and writing material should not be limited just to published work, but should include students' work and teacher-made materials. Print-rich classrooms equip students with equal access to reading and writing materials. These opportunities provide learners with valuable and realistic connections to reading and writing. Opportunities also imply to the students that reading and writing are meaningful. Students who come to school from homes with print-rich environments have a significant advantage in reading and writing over those students who have had limited print exposure (Cunningham and Allington, 1999).

Researchers have discovered evidence that various daily writing methods, instructional strategies in reading, and environmental influences contribute to students' success in reading comprehension. For this project the researchers concentrated on the following six instructional strategies in reading: whole group instruction, small group instruction, self-selected reading, motivational book talks, daily teacher read-alouds, and implementation of the QAR comprehension strategy. "We recognize that children's home backgrounds can influence failure or success, but we believe that what happens in classrooms minute by minute actually determines how much will be learned" (Cunningham and Allington, 1999, p.1). If teachers are consistent and dedicated to implementing instructional strategies in reading, use successful writing methods, and provide students with a motivational environment on a daily basis, children will have the opportunities to become successful readers. "In teaching, as in other professions, well-researched methods and tools are essential" (Anderson, et al., 1985 p. vi-vii).

Project Objectives and Processes

1. As a result of increased instructional emphasis on writing skills during the period of January, 2000 through May, 2000 the targeted second grade students will improve their writing abilities as measured by rubrics (appendix C), portfolios, and teacher observation. Processes used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Model appropriate writing strategies
2. Develop lesson plans that are suited to students needs
3. Provide ample time to practice the writing process
4. Allow time for students to share their writing.

2. As a result of increased emphasis on reading strategies during the period of January, 2000 through May, 2000 the targeted second grade students will improve their reading skills as measured by teacher observation records, student surveys, and reading assessments. Processes used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Schedule daily self-selected reading time
2. Schedule daily teacher read-alouds
3. Implement small and whole group reading instruction
4. Schedule motivational book talks
5. Develop reading and content area lesson plans that provide the use of the QAR strategy.

3. As a result of making changes in the reading environment during the period of January, 2000 through May, 2000 the targeted second grade students will become more motivated readers as measured by student surveys and teacher observation. Processes used to implement this objective include the following:

1. Provide take home book folders, with list, weekly (appendix D)
2. Schedule guest speakers for book talks
3. Make monthly field trips to the public library
4. Provide a print rich environment.

Second Grade Action Plan

Week One: Caring

A. Reading – Helping Hands
1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
    a. Record title of book on list
2. Small Group Instruction daily –Henry and Mudge in Puddle Trouble
    a. Mini-lesson
    b. Introduce QAR bulletin board
3. Whole Group Instruction daily –Amelia Bedelia Helps Out
    a. Give student survey
    b. Fix-up strategy: read on
    c. Plural noun form –s
    d. Long i
4. Self-Selected Reading daily
    a. Mini lessons - 1. How to choose appropriate books
        2. Stuck on a word bulletin board
    b. Evaluate oral reading and comprehension using QRI test

B. Writing
1. Journals
    a. Collect writing samples
    b. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
    c. Daily free writing
    d. Weekly yearbook page
2. Writing Block
    a. Develop writing checklist
    b. Model how to use checklist
    c. Narrative writing
    d. Author's chair

C. Environment
1. Take Home Folders
    a. Decorate
    b. Check out 2 books from classroom library & send home with letter
    c. Record books read
2. Guest Readers
    a. Sandy Crosby (Secretary)
3. Print Rich Environment
    a. Change the books in crates
    b. Students add weekly poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Two: Learning

A. Reading – Finding Out About Our World
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – The Opposite of Pig, The Farmer's Journey, The Ocean by the Lake
      a. Finish QRI testing
      b. Mini-lesson
      c. QAR questioning

   3. Whole Group Instruction daily –A Pet for the Goofs
      a. Details and facts
      b. Verb endings without spelling changes
      c. Long i sound
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lessons: taken from needs as they arrive
      b. Reading conference records
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block – Narrative writing
      a. Mini-lessons – 1. peer editing
         2. process of writing
            a. sloppy copy
            b. editing
            c. final copy
      b. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Field Trips
      a. Visit the public library
   3. Guest Readers
      a. Gary Taets (Ag teacher)
   4. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Three: Learning

A. Reading – Finding Out About Our World
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record tile of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Wild Baby Animals, The Other Side of the Lake, Wrong Way Reggie
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily– "Do-It-Yourself Experiments"
      a. Following directions
      b. Verbs ending with spelling changes
      c. S blends: st, sc, sm, str
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. mini-lesson
      b. Expository writing: How to Explain
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Jim Frankenrider (Science teacher)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Four: Learning

A. Reading – Finding Out About Our World
   1 Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Table for Two, Malawi Keeper of the Trees, Lake Cutter Journal
      b. Mini-lesson
      c. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily- Tomas and the Library Lady
      a. use prior knowledge
      b. verb endings–ed and –ing
      c. syllable division
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Expository writing
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Scott Reekes (Social Studies teacher)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Five: Learning

A. Reading – Finding Out About Our World
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of books on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Eagle in the Sky
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily- My Dog and the Green Sock Mystery
      a. predict outcomes
      b. prefixes pre-,dis-
      c. contractions
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Expository – clues to finding something
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Mrs. Capes (Principal)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Change the books in crates
      b. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Six: Learning

A. Reading – Stories To Learn From
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Horses of the Air
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily - The Tortoise and The Hare
      a. details and facts
      b. R-controlled vowel sounds *ar, or*
      c. Verb endings with spelling changes
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Narrative – Exaggerations
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Field Trips
      a. Visit the public library
   3. Guest Readers
      a. Jacki Boelens (Horse owner)
   4. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Seven: Learning

A. Reading – Stories To Learn From
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – The Friendship Garden
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily - The Monkey and the Pea and The Big fish Who Wasn't So Big
      a. generalize
      b. Prefixes *re-, un-*
      c. Two-syllable words with double consonants
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference records
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page

   Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Narrative – Moral for a story
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Kenny Morgan (Maintenance Man)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Eight: Learning

A. Reading – Animal School
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – The Dog Who Wanted to Be a Tiger, Paloma's Party
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily - "Animal Babies"
      a. classify
      b. R-controlled vowels *er, ir, ur, ar,* and *or*
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Expository – Animals of their choice
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Rose Cathelyn (Cook)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Nine: Learning

A. Reading – Animal School
   1. Read Aloud daily - Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Pasta, The Farmer's Journey
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily - Buffy's Orange Leash
      a. predict from previewing
      b. silent consonants
      c. review R-controlled vowels
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Expository- working animals
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Mrs. Capes (Principal)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Change the books in crates
      b. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Ten: Success

A. Reading – What Can I Do?
1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
    a. Record title of book on list
2. Small Group Instruction daily – Penguins on Parade, Wrong Way Reggie, Don't Forget Fun
    d. Mini-lesson
    e. QAR questioning
3. Whole Group Instruction daily – Soccer Sam
    d. cause and effect
    e. variable sounds for *oo*
    f. silent consonants *kn, gh, wr*
4. Self-Selected Reading daily
    g. Mini-lessons
    h. Reading conference records
    i. Author's chair

B. Writing
1. Journals
    a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
    b. Daily free writing
    c. Weekly yearbook page
2. Writing Block
    a. Mini-lesson
    b. Narrative – feelings
    c. Author's chair

C. Environment
1. Take Home Folders
    a. Check out books
    b. Record books read
2. Field Trips
    a. Visit the public library
3. Guest Readers
    a. Doris Breisser (Nurse)
4. Print Rich Environment
    a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Eleven: Success

A. Reading – What Can I Do?
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – The Big Chief of the Neverwoz, Table For Two, Talk! Talk! Talk!
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily – Nessa's Fish
      a. draw conclusions
      b. less common vowel sounds (*an, aw, al, all*)
      c. review variable sounds for *oo*
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference records
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Descriptive writing of places
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Sue Lanxon (School Librarian)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Twelve: Success

A. Reading – Animal Antics
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Animals of the Tundra, Wrong Way Reggie
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily – Minnie the Mombo Mosquito
      a. plot
      b. variable sounds for *ou*
      c. long vowel *o* (CVCe)
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Friendly letter to Minnie
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Carole Stern (Public Librarian)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Thirteen: Success

A. Reading – Animal Antics
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Clever Bird
      a. Evaluate oral reading and comprehension using QRI testing
      b. Mini-lesson
      c. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily – Gino Badino
      a. identify reading problems
      b. diphthong *oi, oy*
      c. variable sounds for *ou*
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Reading conference record
      c. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      b. Daily free writing
      c. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Narrative – create animal characters
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Guest Readers
      a. Mrs. Capes (Principal)
   3. Print Rich Environment
      a. Change the books in crates
      b. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Week Fourteen: Success

A. Reading – Author Study: James Stevenson
   1. Read Aloud daily – Unit related books
      a. Record title of book on list
   2. Small Group Instruction daily – Hello, Peter- Bonjour, Remy, Animals of the Tundra
      a. Finish QRI testing
      b. Mini-lesson
      c. QAR questioning
   3. Whole Group Instruction daily – "Slippery Ice"
      a. variable sounds for *ow*
      b. less common vowel sounds (*au, aw, al, all*)
      c. Give student survey
   4. Self-Selected Reading daily
      c. Mini-lesson
      d. Reading conference record
      e. Author's chair

B. Writing
   1. Journals
      a. Collect writing samples
      b. Daily Oral Language (DOL)
      c. Daily free writing
      d. Weekly yearbook page
   2. Writing Block
      a. Mini-lesson
      b. Friendly letter to James Stevenson
      c. Author's chair

C. Environment
   1. Take Home Folders
      a. Check out books
      b. Record books read
   2. Field Trips
      a. Visit the public library
   3. Guest Readers
      a. Brenda Haff (Math teacher)
   4. Print Rich Environment
      a. Students add poem to flip chart

D. Evaluate reading and writing needs and plan accordingly

Methods of Assessments

In order to assess the effects of the interventions, writing rubrics were developed and results were compiled to determine the student's progress in the writing process. Reading comprehension assessments were used to determine students' growth in retelling and answering implicit and explicit questions; and weekly teacher observations with checklists during self-selected reading were used to measure use of reading comprehension strategies and decoding strategies. Environmental changes were measured by administering reading attitude surveys to note improved attitudes. Take home book folders were charted to measure any increase in parental support.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of the project was to improve the reading comprehension of the targeted second grade classes. The implementation of increased emphasis on writing skills, reading strategies, and changes in the reading environment were selected to effect the desired changes in the targeted second grade classes. Qualitative Reading Inventory baseline data were collected in August. In early January students were given a reading attitude survey, a writing sample was also collected and scored using a writing rubric, and a teacher observation reading checklist was used during self-selected reading. The project was unique because the two second grade teachers implemented the interventions along with the help from the Title I teacher.

Starting in January a variety of instructional strategies in reading and writing were implemented. The instructional reading strategies used were daily read alouds, small group instruction including the QAR strategy, whole group instruction, daily self-selected reading, take home folders, guest readers, field trips to the public library twice a month, and a print rich environment which included crates of books at students' instructional level and poems on flip charts. The instructional writing strategies used were daily free writing in journals, a weekly yearbook page, and a writing block which included a writing checklist and an opportunity for students to share their written work in the author's chair.

Daily read alouds came from a variety of books chosen by the classroom teacher based on student interest, seasonal changes, and curriculum themes. The students' reading ability was validated as the teacher read from several instructional levels. The classroom teacher allowed 20 minutes each day for read alouds and discussions. The discussions built background knowledge, introduced new vocabulary, and supported comprehension skills. Discussions also provided an opportunity to model reading fluency and voice inflection. Teachers compiled a list of books that included students' favorite read alouds (Appendix E).

Small group reading instruction was a part of each day. Groups were formed based on students' similar reading abilities and reading needs. During small group reading instruction the teacher conducted mini-lessons on reading strategies and QAR strategies to increase students' comprehension of text. The students supported each other's thoughts and ideas in discussions, which developed independence and confidence in their reading abilities.

Whole group reading instruction included a variety of stories from the second grade reading series. All of the students read and discussed the same text at the same time for 20 to 30 minutes each day. At the beginning of the week the students previewed and made predictions about the story. The teacher introduced new vocabulary words, and high-frequency words, and read the story aloud. Throughout the week the teacher asked questions and guided group discussion. As the week progressed the students would listen to the story on tape, partner read, and revisit the story as a whole group.

Self-selected reading was an uninterrupted 30 minute block of time each day. The classroom and Title I teachers selected and placed about one hundred books in reading crates once a month for the students to choose to read. During this time students read books that were of interest to them and at their instructional level. Students compiled a list of their favorite books

to read during this time (Appendix F). At the beginning of each week mini-lessons on how to choose books, reading strategies, and comprehension strategies were introduced or reinforced. Each day the teachers conferenced with three to four students. During the conferences the teacher used a reading checklist to indicate which of the comprehension and decoding skills the reader was applying. This time also offered individual support to the reader. Two students were chosen each day to share about their book. Sharing was guided using graphic organizers and sharing stems listed on chart paper.

Each student decorated a take home reading folder. A record sheet was stapled inside each folder that required a parent signature. Students picked one or two books at their reading level to take home bi-weekly. At home the students would read to their parents, then write one to two sentences about their books. Modifications were made for those students who were reading chapter books. They were asked to read for 15 minutes, and then write about what they had read.

Guest readers came to the classroom each month and read a wide variety of books. Readers were scheduled at the beginning of each month. The principal was one of the guest readers. When the students had all returned their take home reading folders at the end of the month, the principal came into the classroom to read. They looked forward to her visits because she praised them for doing a good job and brought a little treat. The treats were simple, like a piece of candy, a cookie, or an eraser, but the students looked forward to the visit each and every month. The Agriculture and Social Studies teachers were invited to read to the students, however, they were unavailable. Arrangements were made for other readers to take their place. Twenty minutes was allotted for the guests to read and discuss the books of their choice.

The field trips to the public library proved to be the most motivational tool included in the interventions. The students were to take a field trip once a month; however, because of the high interest from students and the librarian, the trips were changed to twice a month. The librarian issued library cards to each student, and they were allowed to check out two books each visit. The students were provided the opportunity to explore a wide variety of reading materials. The books were color-coded to indicate the reading level, which made it easy for students to find books at their instructional reading level. The librarian read to the students at each visit, and sometimes planned an activity. Some activities were historical, such as visiting the old town jail, which was located in one of the back rooms of the library. Other visits contained fun activities like an Easter egg hunt in the shelves of library books. The final visit was a party to celebrate reading, which included games, treats, and the librarian reading the book Thank You Mr. Faulker, which was given to her by the second grade classes.

The print rich environment included a variety of materials in the classroom. Poem charts were displayed for the students to view. Reading crates contained selections of books organized by author, series, or theme such as Spring or butterflies. Books were brought into the classroom from the public library, the school library, and the Title I library. These books were added to the crates or displayed in the room. Students' work was hung on walls in and around the classroom. Bulletin boards showed the QAR strategy, reading strategies, a word wall, and displays of book jackets. Teacher-made charts were also displayed in the classroom. Book orders were sent home once a month. This was a way to encourage parents to increase the amount of reading material in their home. The book orders contained inexpensive books at the students' reading level. All of these materials helped to provide a print rich environment for the targeted second grade classes.

Writing opportunities were provided through free writing journals, yearbook pages, and writing workshop. Free writing journals were used as a means of communication between the teacher and students.Students would write about personal experiences or feelings, and the teacher would respond in the journal. Journal stems were also used during free writing after teacher read alouds, assemblies, and science activities. At the end of each week the students wrote a yearbook page. As a whole group the students brainstormed about what they had learned in each subject using a writing web which guided their writing. Yearbook pages were a collection of weekly academic successes. A writing workshop was established three times a week for 45 minutes each day which included ideas that came from personal experiences, reading, science, and seasonal changes. Each student had an ongoing writing folder with a topic list and it was used to hold writings in progress. A writing checklist chart and a peer-editing chart were developed and posted to aid students on the editing process. When students finished their writings they would share the papers with their peers.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of increased emphasis on writing skills, reading strategies, and changes in the reading environment on the targeted groups reading comprehension the Qualitative Reading Inventory was administered early in the school year, readministered at the beginning of the project, and a final evaluation was taken at the end of the project. Other means of assessment included a reading attitude survey, the use of a writing rubric, and student writing portfolios. The results of the Qualitative Reading Inventory are presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3

Students' Isolated Word Recognition Level Using Qualitative Reading Inventory - II

Recognition Level	Prior	Initial	Follow-up
Primer	1	0	0
First Grade	8	1	0
Second Grade	11	10	4
Third Grade	6	9	11
Fourth Grade	2	5	5
Fifth Grade	0	2	5
Sixth Grade	0	1	3

The researchers noted from the data in Table 3 that the students' isolated word recognition ability increased. The growth in word recognition was consistent throughout the school year. Although growth aids in comprehension, it is not the only factor in determining the students' reading ability. The word recognition list provides the examiners with a starting point for administering reading passages, which determines the readers' comprehension level.

Table 4

Students' Comprehension Level Using Qualitative Reading Inventory - II

Comprehension Level	Prior	Follow-up
Pre-Primer Instructional	0	0
Pre-Primer Independent	1	0
Primer Instructional	0	0
Primer Independent	1	0
First Grade Instructional	6	0
First Grade Independent	5	0
Second Grade Instructional	9	0
Second Grade Independent	2	10
Third Grade Instructional	4	12
Third Grade Independent	0	5
Fourth Grade Instructional	0	1
Fourth Grade Independent	0	0

The reading interventions appeared to have had a positive effect on all of the targeted students' reading comprehension. Early testing reflected that a majority of the students comprehended at or below the second grade instructional level. Post testing showed that all of the students comprehended at or above the second grade independent comprehension level. The data presented in Table 4 displays the positive effects.

Table 5

Students' Fluency Level Using Qualitative Reading Inventory - II

Fluency Level	Prior	Initial	Follow-up
Pre-primer	1	0	0
Primer	1	0	0
First Grade	10	1	0
Second Grade	12	11	10
Third Grade	4	15	17
Fourth Grade	0	1	1

The fluency levels shown in Table 5 for the targeted students did not appear to have notable changes. However, one must consider that as the targeted students progressed in reading skills, the passages they were tested on increased with difficulty. The students' fluency levels were based on any deviations that were made while reading a passage orally.

Table 6

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?		
Students' Feelings	Initial	Follow-up
Very Happy	9	12
Somewhat Happy	8	12
Somewhat Upset	7	3
Very Upset	3	1

Table 7

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?		
Students' Feelings	Initial	Follow-up
Very Happy	6	10
Little Happy	9	11
Little Upset	9	5
Very Upset	4	2

Table 8

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey How do you feel about reading in school?		
Students' Feelings	Initial	Follow-up
Very Happy	7	14
Little Happy	7	8
Little Upset	8	4
Very Upset	4	2

The researchers concluded from the data in Tables 6, 7, and 8 that the interventions appeared to have a positive effect on the students' attitudes toward reading. In January, 41% of the students had a poor attitude towards reading. In April, only 20% of the students had a poor attitude. The students' confidence improved as they discussed and responded to what they had read.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on reading comprehension, all of the targeted students improved in the ability to comprehend during the implementation of the action plan. Students' isolated word recognition, comprehension levels, and fluency levels improved. The number of students who had positive attitudes towards reading increased. Writing was an excellent bridge to reading as the students gained in vocabulary and grammar usage. The number of students who read books at home increased. Students began to use the library more frequently. Overall the motivation to read increased.

Portfolios and writing rubrics were used to assess several pieces of the students' writing. The rubrics showed writing gains in the targeted second grade classes. By the end of the project, the researchers noted from the rubrics that the students were using most of the conventions correctly. Students consistently elaborated and added more details to their writing. Researchers observed a trend in spelling, the appearance of fewer errors while spelling high-frequency words. The surprise came with the realization that the students' vocabulary usage had expanded.

Observation checklists were used to monitor students as they read during self-selected reading time. Improvements were shown in the targeted second grade classes. Students showed improvements on fluency, expression, comprehension, and in using a variety of strategies to decode unfamiliar words. The students became better independent readers.

The Qualitative Reading Inventory-II was administered to all the targeted second grade students. Gains were made in the students' isolated word recognition, comprehension, and fluency.

The students became better readers as measured by student surveys and oral reading checklists. Writing rubrics indicated students' writing improved. The students demonstrated

increased ability to recognize words, comprehend, and became more fluent readers as measured by the Qualitative Reading Inventory-II.

All of the interventions contributed to the success of the project. Field trips to the library, writing block, self-selected reading time, the use of QAR strategies, and take home folders were particularly successful. Field trips to the library provided students with more access to print material. The students were extremely motivated to read and make use of the library. Writing block and journaling allowed students to practice writing. Consistency and the ability to provide an ample block of time were crucial to the success of the writing block. Pride, accountability, and individuality were evident as the children shared their work. Daily individual conferencing made the teacher more aware of students' needs and helped to guide instruction. Self-selected reading time provided reading practice and was an important component of the second grade action plan. Independent reading helped students build fluency, work on reading strategies, enjoy reading materials, and boost self-confidence in personal reading abilities. Question Answer Relationship (QAR) enabled second grade students to increase comprehension. The students were extremely motivated to develop their own questions using the QAR strategy. Take-home folders provided books in the home. Students practiced reading by reading to parents. The involvement of a parent motivated the students to read at home.

Based on analysis of the data, the following recommendations are made. Educators should develop lesson plans that provide consistent and adequate blocks of time for reading practice, instruction of reading strategies, reading opportunities, and writing opportunities. Develop a print rich environment to expose students to a wide variety of reading materials. Encourage parent and community involvement while motivating students to read. Lesson plans can be designed to focus on the reading-writing connection, and provide appropriate strategies in

reading and writing, and allow adequate blocks of uninterrupted time to practice the reading and writing connection. Formal and informal reading and writing assessments should be on going and provide teachers with guidelines when making lesson plans. "The primary classroom is the laboratory in which children discover literacy; but the most essential element in that process is the teacher who provides the raw material – demonstrations, explanations, appropriate materials, feedback, and encouraging and revealing interactions." (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. xvii)

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Appendix A

Reading Conference Record

Name _____

DATE			
TITLE of BOOK			
DECODING STRATEGIES			
1. Picture clues			
2. Letter-sounds			
3. Word patterns			
COMPREHENSION STR.			
1. Reread			
2. Context clues			
3. Skip/return			
4. Sub. Reasonable wds			
AFTER READING			
1. Sequencing			
2. Recall details			
3. Main idea			
FLUENCY/PHRASING			
VOICE INFLECTION			
Sight words to work on			
STRATEGIES TAUGHT			
COMMENTS:			

c:\excel\reading record

Appendix B

Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School _____ Grade _____ Name _____

1. How do you feel when you read a book in a school during free time?

2. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?

3. How do you feel about spending free time reading?

4. How do you feel about starting a new book?

5. How do you feel about reading during summer?

6. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?

7. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?

8. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?

9. How do you feel about doing reading workbook pages and worksheets?

10. How do you feel about reading in school?

11. How do you feel when it's time for reading in class?

12. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?

13. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?

14. How do you feel about taking a reading test?

Appendix C

2nd Grade Writing Rubric

Name	Date
Title of Writing Piece	
No Writing	0
Very little writing	1
Conventions were not used	1
The writing is not about the topic	1
At least two details were included	2
Did not elaborate on details	2
Some conventions were used	2
Includes at least three or four details	3
Elaborated on details	3
Most of the conventions were correct	3
TOTAL POINTS SCORED	
0-3 below expectation 4-6 progressing toward expectations 7-9 meets expectations	

Name	Date
Title of Writing Piece	
No Writing	0
Very little writing	1
Conventions were not used	1
The writing is not about the topic	1
At least two details were included	2
Did not elaborate on details	2
Some conventions were used	2
Includes at least three or four details	3
Elaborated on details	3
Most of the conventions were correct	3
TOTAL POINTS SCORED	
0-3 below expectation 4-6 progressing toward expectations 7-9 meets expectations	

Appendix D

Take Home Book List Name_____

Date	Title of Book	Initials

Appendix E

Teacher Read Alouds

If You Give a Moose a Muffin Laura Joffe Numeroff
If You Give a Mouse a Cookie Laura Joffe Numeroff
James and the Giant Peach Roald Dahl
Freckle Juice Judy Blume
Junie B. Jones and the Yucky Blucky Fruitcake Barbara Park
Vampires Don't Wear Polka Dots Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones
Chocolate Fever Robert Kimmel Smith
The Littles John Peterson
The Littles and the Terrible Tiny Kid John Peterson
The Littles' Surprise Party John Peterson
The Littles and the Biggs John Peterson
Little House in the Big Woods Laura Ingalls Wilder
Dinosaurs Before Dark Mary Pope Osborn
Buffalos Before Breakfast Mary Pope Osborn
Chocolate Touch Patricia Skene Catling
How to Eat Fried Worms Thomas Rockwell
Snow Shapes Judith Moffatt
Snowflake Bentley Jacqueline Briggs Martin
Snow Dance Lezlie Evans
Good-bye, Mr. Snowman! Darwin McBeth Walton
Old Winter Judith Benet Richardson
The Hat Jan Brett
Three Cheers for Tacky Helen Lester
Snip, Snip . . . Snow! Nancy Poydar
Cuddly Dudley Jez Alborough
Clifford, We Love You Norman Bridwell
One Zillion Valentines Frank Modell
Bunny Trouble Hans Wilhelm
How Spider Saved Easter Robert Kraus
Peter Cottontail Amanda Stephens

Appendix F

Student Book Picks

Owen Kevin Henkes
Anna and the Little Green Dragon Klaus Baumgart
Firehouse Dog Amy and Richard Hutchings
Peanut Butter Rhino Vincent Andriani
Pony Pals Series Jeanne Betancourt
Arthur Series Marc Brown
Amelia Bedelia books Peggy Parish
Junie B. Jones Series Barbara Park
Nate the Great books Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
Monarch Butterfly Gail Gibbons
Listen Buddy Helen Lester
There's a Mouse About the House Richard Fowler
Minnie and Moo Go to the Moon Denys Cazet
Henry and Mudge books Cynthia Rylant
Black Lagoon books Mike Thaler
Berenstain Bear books Stan and Jan Berenstain
Magic Tree House Series Mary Pope Osborne
Magic School Bus books Joanna Cole
Bailey School Kids Series Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones
Pee Wee Scouts Series Patricia Reilly Giff
Bear books Frank Asch
Fox books Edward Marshall
The Kids of the Polk Street School Series Patricia Reilly Giff
Franklin books Paulette Bourgeois
Horrible Harry Series Suzy Kline
Hello Readers Levels 1-4
Step into Reading 1 and 2
Little Critter books Mercer Mayer
Two Cool Cows Toby Speed
No More Water in the Tub Ted Arnold
Tomie dePaola books Tomie dePaola
No Jumping on the Bed Tedd Arnold
Tops and Bottoms Janet Stevens
Clue Junior Series Parker C. Hinter
The Trip to Grandma's Cass Hollander
I Don't Want to Take a Bath! Julie Seykes
I Love Saturday Patricia Reilly Giff